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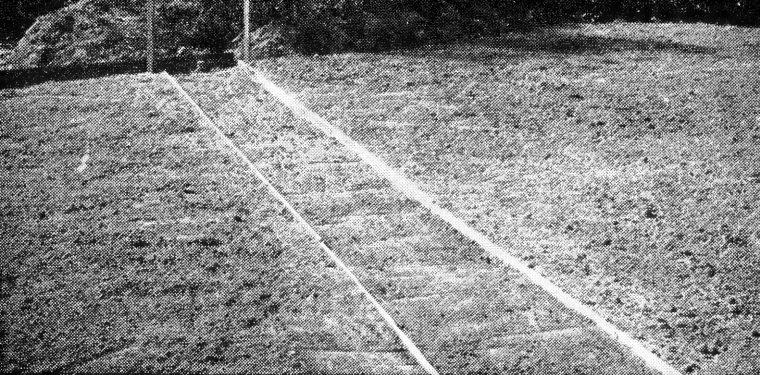
JUN 21 1954

U. S. Department of Agriculture

*Beautiful
Lawn*



**A practical guide to easier lawn making
and maintenance**



In laying out the lawn area, mark off walks and flower borders with wood strips.

LAYING OUT THE LAWN

With the preliminaries attended to, it is time to think about the general layout.

The whole job of garden-making will be much simpler if you can plan now for any needed walks, garden beds, borders, etc.

After making a ground plan to scale, on a piece of squared paper, mark off proposed paths and other features with thin strips of wood two to three inches wide, driven on edge into the surface soil and held in place by sturdy twelve-inch stakes. These will remain in good condition for several seasons if you want to leave them as boundaries, or they can be removed when other more permanent edgings, such as brick or stone, are installed.

SEED

It is not too soon to order lawn seed at this point, though the lawn area is not yet ready for sowing. You need four to five pounds per thousand square feet.

For the average home lawn, a good mixture is preferable to a fancy turf of Bent grass that will require expert care and constant attention.

Do not try to save by buying cheap seed. It will cost more in the end, due to poor germination, varieties not suited for lawn turf, and the introduction of weed seeds.

If you want the best advice on the particular mixture suited to your location, consult your County Agent or State Experiment Station. Failing this, consult the concern from which you make your purchase, describing the condition of the soil, sun, shade, and the general lay of the land. In the North, mixtures of

Chewings Fescue, Kentucky Bluegrass and one of the Bents are usually recommended.

If you want to add clover, buy White Clover seed separately and sow it separately over the lawn area at the rate of one ounce to each pound of grass seed.

GRADING

The lawn builder now has the entire area of the proposed lawn bare of any vegetation, well loosened up and with a top four inches of good soil pulverized so that both air and water can permeate it.

But don't think for a minute that it is ready for seeding. Grading comes first—a process which is often neglected, resulting in a poor lawn.

By grading we mean creating a smooth even surface. This can be level or sloping, according to the lay of the land, but it should not be marred by humps or hollows where young seedling grass may burn out in the one case or drown in the other. If the area is large, it will pay to have the job done by a contractor with adequate power tools.

In a small lawn, grading can be done satisfactorily with hand tools by shoveling or raking soil from the high spots into the depressions. The filled areas will have to be trodden and tamped down to make them as firm as the surrounding surfaces. After that, the whole area is raked over as many times as may be necessary to give a smooth, even surface.

In grading a lawn, a line level is an invaluable help. It is hung on a line stretched taut across the area in any given direction. The lawn maker can then readily detect deviations from the level and correct them with his shovel and rake.



Soil, peat moss and fertilizer are mixed together and screened for the surface dressing which will form the seed bed.

PREPARATION OF SOIL

Now, we come to the most important part of lawn making—preparing the top two to three inches of soil. It is in this top few inches of earth that seed will germinate and roots of young grasses grow.

Think of your new lawn area as a huge seedbed in which conditions must be ideal for the germination and development of the seedlings. If you do this, it is easy to see that soil should be prepared with just as much care as that for the planting of flower seeds.

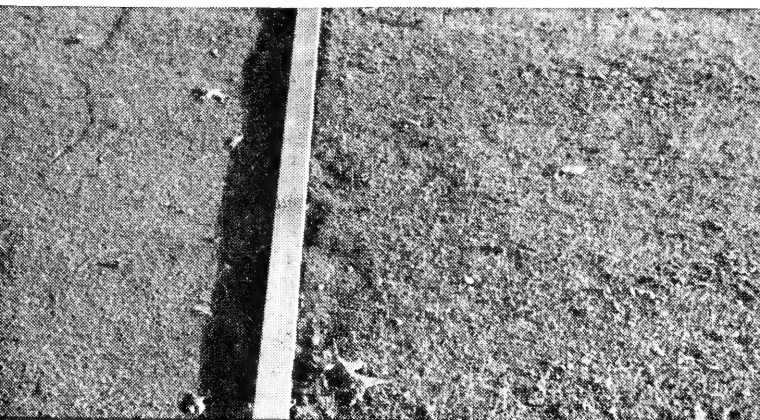
To provide ideal conditions, a two to three-inch layer of humus-rich compost is spread over the area.

Food for the young plants is needed, too. It is provided by three parts dried commercial manure and one part bonemeal, applied at three pounds per fifty square feet. On acid soil, the addition of three to six pounds of raw ground limestone per fifty square feet, depending on the degree of acidity, is advisable.

The easiest way to apply this top layer of enriched compost is to mix well one part of good topsoil with one part of finely granulated horticultural peat moss (which is one of the best sources of humus). Screened, well-rotted compost can be substituted or commercial humus or mushroom soil. To this mixture the lime, bonemeal and dried manure can be added at the rate noted above. The whole mixture should be run through a 3/4-inch screen before spreading.

If plenty of well-rotted cow manure is available, this can be used instead of the peat moss and dried manure, the same bulk being used. *Plenty of humus* is especially needed. Manure provides this.

If it is necessary to use a chemical fertilizer (such as 4-12-4 or 5-10-5 analysis) this should be spread on the lawn area, and cultivated in, preferably ten days or more *before* applying the top layer. Use three to five pounds per hundred square feet.



Grass seed germination in soil without (left) and with (right) compost top dressing. Surface at left has formed crust. Seed and all other conditions identical. Eight days after sowing.



This picture tells an important story. Area above, sown in late September; area in foreground, sown in early April. All conditions identical. Photo in August. Rough grass in foreground is Crabgrass.

After spreading the compost, rake it down well and roll the whole area. (Fill in and tamp down any new soft spots before seeding.) Rake over once more.

SOWING

At last you are ready to sow the lawn seed.

This is an operation which is done best in late August or early September, when the cool days and nights of early autumn will get the new lawn off to a good start.

To insure even distribution of seed, mark the entire lawn area off into ten, fifteen or twenty foot squares, using white string. One pound of seed will be needed for each two to two hundred and fifty square feet. For small lawns, you can use a small grass sower that is held in the hand and worked like a flour sifter. It will help to secure even distribution.

Whether you use a seed sower or plant by hand, select a still day to avoid the wind seeding your neighbor's lawn instead of yours. Divide the amount of seed you expect to use into two equal parts. If you sow by hand, use a circular motion of the arm, taking only a small handful of seed at a time, and moving forward very slowly, step by step. After seed has been sown over each marked area in one direction, use the second lot of seed to sow again over the same ground at right angles to the first sowing, to get an even distribution.

For large areas, buy or rent a grass seed drill. Experiment with this on a ten by ten foot plot (one hundred square feet), until the seed control lever is adjusted to drop the desired amount of seed.

After sowing, cover the seed very lightly by going over the surface with an iron rake, using the teeth or the back, according to the condition of the soil.

When the seed is raked in, roll the entire lawn again, leaving it as smooth as the top of a cake.



In sowing grass on steep slopes, strips of sod, set into prepared soil and firmly tamped, will help prevent seed washing and erosion.

REMAKING OR REPAIRING OLD LAWNS

An old lawn may need complete remaking if it was badly constructed in the first place, with inadequate drainage, insufficient topsoil or too little humus content in the surface layer.

Method I— Strip off the old sod entirely (preferably in late August) and compost it for future use. Turn the bare ground with a fork to a depth of at least four inches and proceed as in building a new lawn.

Method II— Leave the old sod where it is and chop it up completely without turning it, by using a hand or power cultivator and working the ground to a depth of at least four inches, first in one direction and then again at right angles, so that the turf is broken into small pieces and the soil under it well loosened up and cultivated. On this broken surface apply the top layer of humusy compost, and proceed as in making a new lawn.

Method III— If an old lawn merely needs repair because of neglect, rake out all old dead grass and remove all weeds, either in *very* early spring or in August. Then vigorously rake over the whole area with a heavy iron rake to loosen up the soil as much as possible, especially on all the bare spots. Now top-dress the entire lawn to be repaired to a depth of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch with a mixture such as that described on page 6 and rake and water it in.

Twelve hours after watering, rake the area again, sow the seed at the rate of about one to two pounds of seed to five hundred square feet, depending on the amount of old turf remaining intact. Roll well after sowing, and keep constantly moist until new grass is well established.

CARE AFTER SOWING

The first care of the newly seeded lawn is a thorough watering, given as soon as the ground is rolled.

Of course a gentle misty rain following immediately on planting and rolling would be ideal. Lacking that, however, you must water. If you use an ordinary rotating sprinkler, or the hose, move it frequently enough to let the water sink into the lawn, and then give a second and, if needed, a third application, until the soil is moist to a depth of several inches. Puddles of water lying on the surface, or streamlets running off and carrying seed with them, should be avoided. Water frequently enough to keep the surface *constantly* moist until the seed germinates.

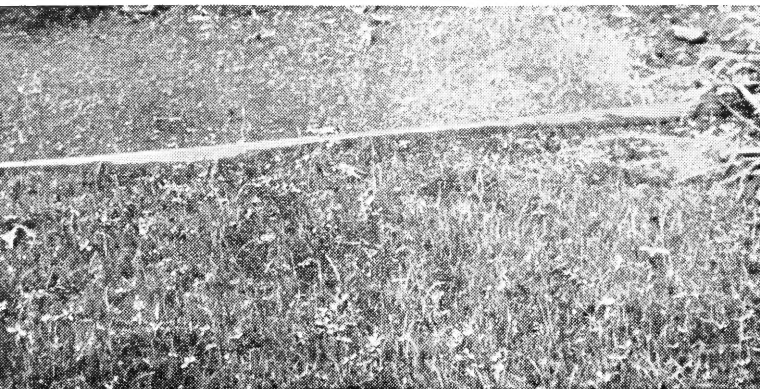
After the grass seedlings appear, which should be within a week or ten days, continue watering, since a hot windy day may dry out the surface so much that the little grass plants are literally burned up.

By the end of the third week the worst danger should be over, a fair turf with well-established roots should be already forming, and watering, while still necessary in dry weather, is no longer a vital need for the germinating seeds and struggling seedlings. Frequent watering throughout the entire first season is, however, good insurance.

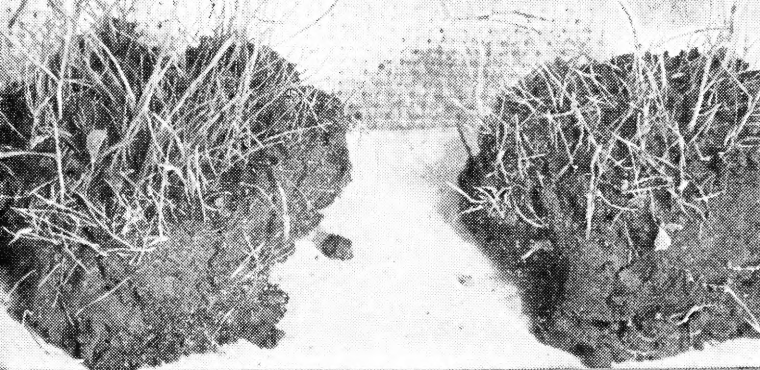
During germination and when seedlings are taking root, your lawn may seem to be a magnet for dogs, children, and birds. By erecting a simple string fence, strips of cloth are attached as a visual safety precaution, it is possible to minimize damage caused by the former. Do not patch up foot prints until grass has matured. While birds appear to be gorging themselves, their damage effects are negligible.

Remember that various grasses in your mixture germinate over different periods, permanent grasses taking longer. What may first appear to be a thin covering becomes thicker as permanent grasses grow.

For instructions on the first mowing of the new lawn, see page 12.



Grass in foreground, on compost-topped soil, nearly ready for first clipping, while that at rear (without compost) still shows wide bare areas.



Grass seedlings from compost topped soil (left) and without compost (right). Former shows much more vigorous growth, especially of finer grasses.

FEEDING AND FERTILIZERS

The best and easiest way to feed the established lawn is by the yearly or bi-yearly application, 1/4- to 1/2-inch thick, of a top dressing of compost to which the necessary fertilizers have been added. If this system is faithfully adhered to, it will seldom or never be necessary to apply fertilizers separately.

Method I—Sifted compost from the well-rotted heap may be used, or lacking that, a screened mixture of one part garden loam and one part horticultural peat moss or leaf mold. To each cubic yard of this sifted mixture, add ten to twenty pounds of a 5-10-5 formula complete fertilizer; or better, of a reliable complete lawn fertilizer in which part of the nitrogen is supplied by organic materials. This will top-dress about one thousand square feet of lawn, and should be applied in *early* spring, as soon as the frost is well out of the ground. A second application in late August or early September is advisable. After applying, rake in with a wooden rake, and water.

Where the above preferred method is not followed, ten to twenty pounds of a complete fertilizer can be applied to each thousand square feet of turf in early spring and again in early fall, but always when the grass blades are dry, to avoid burning. Sooner or later, however, it will become necessary to add humus to the lawn, and by mixing the fertilizer with the compost (as in Method I) the humus content is kept up at all times.

FERTILIZERS

Ammonium Sulfate— is an inorganic fertilizer containing 30% nitrogen. It stimulates the growth of grass and discourages many weeds. As it may burn, it should be mixed with compost before applying.

Bonemeal— is a slow acting, safe organic fertilizer.

Dried Manure— is commercially-prepared natural manure, usually mixed with a peat moss or other base. It is a satisfactory substitute for the barnyard variety.

Cottonseed Meal— is recommended for lawn use as it is rich in nitrogen, needed by the grass, and also because its application never injures turf. It also provides some humus.

Soybean Meal— is similar to the above and equally desirable.

Limestone— Raw ground (or Horticultural) is a soil conditioner rather than a fertilizer. It neutralizes acid soil. This is the safest form of lime to use.

WATERING

A well-constructed lawn, once the sod is thoroughly established, needs watering only under really dry conditions. Too much "sprinkling," especially if it does not really soak the turf to a depth of four to six inches, may do more harm than good as it draws the roots toward the surface in search of the inadequate moisture supplied there, and benefits shallow rooted weeds more than the grass. Very heavy watering when not actually needed, may, on the other hand, waterlog the soil and drown the grass roots, especially on clay soils where drainage is poor.

Water established lawns between May and September in really dry spells if the sod is dry down to its roots. Water each area slowly and thoroughly so that the moisture really penetrates the soil. One such deep watering usually lasts a week to ten days if there is enough humus in the soil to hold moisture as it should. In extremely sandy soils, watering may be needed almost daily in drought periods.

Although watering of the lawn may be necessary only occasionally throughout the summer season, it is essential that water be available if needed. If possible have outdoor spigots installed at points which will make it convenient to cover the whole lawn in case of need. A very efficient way of watering a lawn is with a "rain machine" which turns from side to side, throwing sprays of water drops in a wide fan from irrigation nozzles.

Rotating sprinklers usually apply water more quickly and (depending on the soil) it may be necessary occasionally to turn them off to allow the water to be absorbed into the ground.

LAWN MOWING

Mowing is a most important part of lawn maintenance. Properly done, it keeps the lawn looking well—benefits grass plants and helps to build a thick, carpet-like turf. Improperly done, it can go far toward wrecking even a well-made lawn.

The first step toward good mowing is a good mower. A poor mower not only does poor work; it is, in the end, *more expensive* than a good mower. And it is always a time-waster and a source of annoyance.

First Mowing—When the young grass plants have reached a height of about three inches, *but not before*, the lawn can receive its first cut. Set the blades high—one and a half to two inches. *They should be newly sharpened.* A dull, cranky, or otherwise inefficient mower may do serious damage, as the young plants are readily pulled out by the roots.

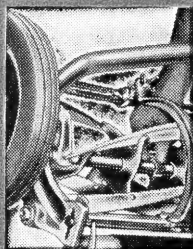
Unless the clippings are so heavy that they form mats, let them lie as they fall. The soil as yet has no thick sod to shade it, and the clippings serve as a desirable light mulch.

After the lawn has been cut three or four times, the clippings can be removed if desired; but if mowing is done each time the grass has made one to two inches of new growth, this will seldom be necessary.

Keep the grass about one to one and a half inches high. Most lawns are cut too close to maintain the turf at its best. Close mowing in hot, dry weather is likely to cause serious injury. Adjust your mower to heights suitable for the season. Delay the first spring mowing until the grass has made some substantial growth.

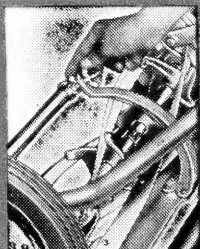
Mow Frequently—It actually takes less time and effort to cut the lawn twice when the grass is moderately high than once when it has been allowed to get too high. In the latter case there is danger, too, of injury to the sod.

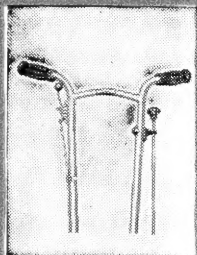
Keep the grass cut as late as it continues to grow vigorously. It is *not* necessary to leave it long through the winter. On the contrary, long grass may result in a “lumpy” lawn, or bare spots, in the spring.



Eclipse automatic sharpener assures a sharp cutting action at all times.

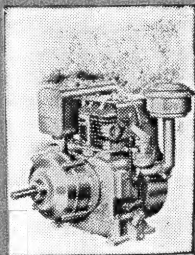
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WEEDS; PESTS

The most effective way of controlling—or rather *preventing*—weeds in a lawn is to have a turf so thick and vigorous that they cannot get a start. One of the great advantages of fall sowing is that the turf is well established before lawn weeds—particularly crab-grass—can offer competition.

During the first few weeks after planting, some weeds are likely to appear among the grass plants, especially if weed seeds have been present in the top-soil, or manure used in preparing the lawn, or if poor quality seed has been used. The best time to get them out is immediately after the first mowing. The soil should be moist so the roots will come out readily, without breaking off at the surface. String guides (see page 7) are an aid to clean weeding.

Chemical weed controls are sometimes helpful but should be applied only with expert care. None of them are 100% effective.

PESTS

Insect pests and diseases are not too likely to be troublesome in the small home lawn, but they should be watched for, and action taken immediately if they appear. Most diseases are serious only *when grass is cut close—below 1-1/4 inches; on single grass turf (such as Bent) rather than mixtures; and when drainage or some other cultural condition is poor.*

In using any controls, follow directions *minutely*. Here are a few of the most common troubles.

Japanese Beetle Grubs—eat roots in May, June. Lead arsenate powder, 1 lb. to 100 sq. feet.

Cinch Bugs—Tiny gray insects turn turf brown in patches. Rotenone dust or nicotine dust.

Ants—Don't cut turf close. Poison bait (thallium sulfate) or gas.

Leaf Spot—Dark spots at base of Kentucky Blue-grass blades, usually in late spring. Cut 1-1/4 inches high; withhold water.

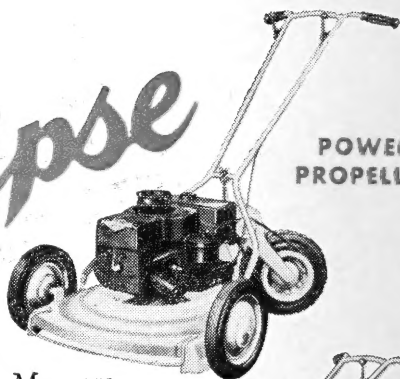
Brown Patch and Dollar Patch—Attack Bent Grasses in warm, humid weather causing wilted areas or dead grass. Avoid afternoon watering. Organic mercury compound.

Snow Mold—Usually late fall or early spring, leaving bleached looking dead patches. Organic mercury compounds.

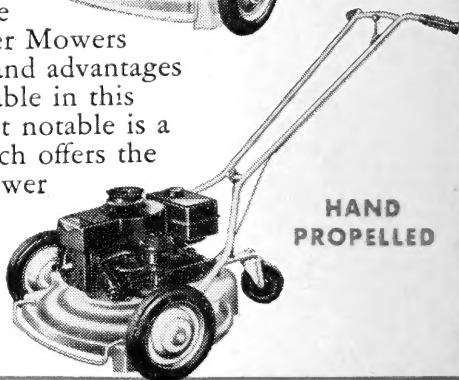
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